

LOG OF MEETING

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SUBJECT: Flexible Metal Gas Connectors

DATE: June 11, 1996

PLACE: Consumer Product Safety Commission  
Room 715

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Lawrence L. Hershman  
Special Assistant to the Chairman

MEETING REQUESTED BY: CPSC Staff

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION (CPSC) REPRESENTATIVES:

Ronald L. Medford, Assistant Executive Director, Office  
of Hazard Identification & Reduction  
Carlos L. Perez, Deputy Assistant Executive Director,  
Office of Compliance  
Lawrence L. Hershman, Special Assistant to the Chairman  
Donald W. Switzer, Directorate for Engineering Sciences  
James Bertoch, Directorate for Engineering Sciences  
Kate Sedney, Division of Human Factors, Directorate for  
Engineering Sciences  
Richard Frost, Deputy Director, Office of Information  
and Public Affairs  
Robert Franklin, Directorate for Economic Analysis

AMERICAN GAS ASSOCIATION (AGA) REPRESENTATIVES:

Kevin B. Belford, General Counsel  
James A. Ranfone, Director, Codes, Standards and  
Technical Support


OTHER ATTENDEE:

Sam Cristy, Washington Business Information, Inc.

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

Mr. Medford opened the meeting by describing the staff's concern that gas leak incidents with older style flexible connectors continue to occur.

Mr. Belford gave a summary of what AGA knows about the flexible connector situation. He said that most failures involved Cobra or Cobra-type connectors of a vintage from 1956 or 1958 to 1964, and used mostly with ranges. For the past 10 years, most problems have occurred on ranges manufactured between 1970 and 1980, which indicates that the connectors were not



replaced when these ranges were installed. Another factor contributing to older connectors not being replaced in a timely fashion is that it is not unusual for appliances, such as ranges, in some multiple unit dwellings to not be replaced or serviced for 30 years or more.

Mr. Belford described recent changes in utility practices, often due to state utility commissions, that limit service they provide to customers up to the service meter. Few utilities now offer service on appliances within the residence. Rather than focusing on one brand or type of appliance, utilities focus their efforts at educating consumers on safety issues to urging consumers to have all of their appliances inspected. Performing regular service and inspection of appliances is now largely a matter of consumers hiring private contractors. Utilities still respond to gas leaks and other emergency situations.

Mr. Medford asked the AGA representatives about their willingness to undertake another flexible connector safety program (at CPSC's urging, AGA had done such a program in 1980). Mr. Belford said that utilities prefer more broad-based, generic safety efforts, but Mr. Medford said CPSC wanted an explicit warning about flexible connectors. Mr. Belford said that AGA did not want to detract from larger problems. He added, however, that he thought utilities would be willing to include specific information about connectors in a general safety check for gas appliances.

The AGA representatives said that AGA would develop safety information and provide it to individual utilities, who would incorporate it into their own programs. Mr. Medford said that it is important to CPSC that AGA build into any program a feedback mechanism so that AGA could provide CPSC with nationwide results of the program. Mr. Belford said that one obstacle to accurate feedback is that most service would be performed by private contractors, not AGA members. He said that any program would have to include private contractors and building code and inspection officials. There was discussion of how these professionals could be included in any safety program.

The attendees agreed to schedule another meeting, to include manufacturer representatives. The AGA representatives agreed to make available to AGA members any materials developed as part of a flexible connector safety program.